

THANKFULNESS

(Discourse below by Frank Draper, 1913 Convention Report, start page 20.)

Thankfulness is the general theme for today and our study therefore will be in keeping with it. I will read the 100th Psalm: *“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness, come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God; it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth to all generations.”* Also the first verse of the 106th Psalm: *“Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever.”*

Our subject is certainly a very extensive one. We could enumerate hundreds of reasons we have for thankfulness to our dear Heavenly Father and to our dear Redeemer, but I will not attempt to enumerate hundreds, or one hundred, or even a dozen. I have in mind perhaps four or five particular causes for thankfulness to our dear Heavenly Father and also to our dear Redeemer, for remember it is the Father’s good pleasure that we should honor His Son even as we honor Him. We have many good earthly temporal blessings to be thankful for—food, shelter, raiment and many other blessings of this class, all coming from our Father’s bountiful hand; for every good gift comes from above, from the Father of Lights. Some of these good gifts come to us directly; others indirectly, through natural channels. We feel this morning very thankful to our dear Heavenly Father for them.

We do not think of asking Him for such favors or blessings. We really have no occasion to ask Him for favors of this kind. I do not suppose we ever think of doing so, any more than to the extent and in the manner our dear Lord taught us, saying, Pray after this manner, Give us this day our daily bread. And that apparently is more in the way of acknowledging that we are pensioners upon God’s favor and goodness.

I was thinking this morning of the advice our dear Master gave to His immediate disciples, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Strive to enter in through the straight and narrow gate into the spiritual Kingdom, give special attention to this matter now, and God will add to you all the temporal blessings and good things you need. Do not worry about temporal matters at all, wherewithal ye shall be clothed, and what ye shall eat, for the Gentiles seek after those things—those who are not the Lord’s consecrated people, those who are not disciples of Jesus—but don’t you worry about those things at all. Do the best you can in the Lord’s service and feel assured that He will not let you lack for clothing and food while you are fighting the good fight of faith; He won’t let you starve to death, because it is necessary you should have sufficient time to make your calling and election sure; so,

without giving any anxious thought to the temporal things, seek first, chiefly, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

In the 33rd chapter of Isaiah it is said of a certain class: "Bread shall be given them; their water shall be sure." I am quite sure that reference is not made in this text to literal bread and literal water to sustain our physical bodies. The context shows it means the bread of truth and the water of truth, given to a certain class, a consecrated class, those who at the present time are standing the fiery test, the severe trials God's people are being subjected to. The other text quoted a while ago plainly shows that the Lord will furnish us with natural bread and water while we continue in His service. But seek first, chiefly, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.

Oh, we have so many temporal favors to thank God for today, dear brethren. Of all the people in the world the Lord's people have cause to be most thankful. I trust we are the most thankful of all God's human creatures. How thankful we ought to be for the pleasant surroundings we are in here, being permitted to come aside from the world for a week of fellowship with the brethren and fellowship with the Lord through prayer and praise and study of the Word! Truly we ought to call upon all that is within us to laud and magnify God's holy name, and we should strive constantly to be joyful rather than to be sad-visaged. We should be cheerful. I said striving; it will not be necessary to do much striving if we have the oil of gladness in our hearts, the spirit of God, the spirit of love for God and for Christ, and for the brethren.

Then, secondly, we should be very thankful for the Lord's discipline. Remember that whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges, disciplines, every son whom He receives. Had you ever noticed this particularly—"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"? He is chastising His people at the present time because He has a special love for them. Why has He a special love for them? Because they have a special love for Him. Every person who becomes a disciple of Christ must exercise the love that the Holy Angels do not exercise, do not have opportunity to exercise, and that mankind will not have opportunity to exercise, and that mankind will not have an opportunity to exercise in the Millennial Age, and therefore the kind of love the dear Master expressed when He said to His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." What kind of love? The kind the dear Master exercised toward His disciples—sacrificing love, self-denying love. Now, to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength in the present time, it is necessary to cultivate and exercise that kind of love, that self-denying and sacrificing love, and notice that those who do that God has a special love for. He had such love for the whole human race that He gave Christ to die for them while they were all sinners. But when a person has so much love for God, and truth, and righteousness, duty love of the kind our dear brother spoke about awhile ago, that he consecrates himself fully to

God, feeling it is the right thing to do, is a reasonable service, doing that when it costs self-denial, God has a special love for that person. That person is as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. The arch-enemy, Satan, will not touch that person to his spiritual injury. Underneath that person are the everlasting arms. He has already made a covenant with God by the sacrifice of himself; he loved God so much that he surrendered his will fully to Him when it meant baptism into Christ's death. And because he made that covenant with God now by sacrificing himself, God has a love for him of the kind He never had for the holy angels or for mankind generally—a very particular love—and He is seeing to it now that all things work together for good to this class because they love God and are called according to His purpose.

Did you ever notice specially the order of this proposition? It is not said they are called according to God's purpose, and love God. It is the other way. They love God and are called according to His purpose. No one will ever be called according to God's purpose for this High Calling of God in Christ Jesus who does not love God enough to make a full consecration of himself in this present evil world when it means self-denial and sacrifice even unto death. Those who love God enough to do that are called according to His purpose. And the light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. That is a marvelous statement. Probably the Apostle Paul could not have used a stronger expression than this to signify the glory that Jesus' faithful disciples will attain and share with Him. The holy angels have great glory, restored humanity will have great glory, but this is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It is a comparative term, you see; it is greater than these other glories—the Divine glory, and it is to last forever. God is letting Jesus' disciples suffer. What we mean by this is, they do not deserve to suffer, and it would be wrongful from every other standpoint than this, that God has arranged that they can share Christ's sufferings so they may share His glory. It is something justice does not demand. Sacrifice unto death the Divine law does not require of anyone, but when a person loves God so much he makes that covenant now before God's time comes to make the New Covenant with the Israelites directly, and eventually for the blessing of as many as will become submissive to the righteous Law of Jehovah, Jesus' disciples who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice of themselves, stand now in God's estimation where perfect human beings will stand in the Millennial Age—the sheep of this fold stand now in God's estimation where the sheep of the other fold will stand in the Millennial Age. What standing is that? They are in full covenant relationship with God, entitled to live now, but God lets them suffer now, not because justice demands it, but to get them ready for joint heirship with His dear Son; and their sufferings are laying up treasures in Heaven for them all the time.

Then thirdly, another cause of thankfulness to God—and of course we thank God always through our dear Redeemer—is fellowship with the Lord's dear people. What a precious boon that is. I am glad to tell you I appreciate that more now than I used to. I see they

have weaknesses as formerly, they are still making mistakes, they sometimes speak a little sharply, or commit an act that might hurt the feelings of others, but I feel more disposed than ever to overlook faults and mistakes in the brethren, I have so many of my own, and I thank God I have a little more love for the brethren than I had a few years ago. And, Oh, I take such pleasure in their fellowship! Not very long ago I spent a night at a hotel, when conditions made it necessary, and I really wanted a little time to myself. Many times the Pilgrims get tired mentally and physically also, and like to have an hour or two to themselves to think, read, meditate and rest their minds, etc., but I will tell you that night I really felt lonely. Here is a night passing, and I was not meeting the Lord's people, was not having fellowship. Really, in that big hotel I felt rather lonely and was glad when I got back to the Lord's people. I do love the brethren, and I tell them I love them. From time to time I let our dear Pastor know that I love him. I tell him I do. I am sure it encourages him. As our dear Brother Johnson said a while ago, God's great heart is delighted when His creatures love Him. You could not give anything to God that He would be more pleased with than your love. How thankful we are that those who are now fellowshipping each other, and loving each other and laying down their lives for one another, may spend eternity together. How thankful we are for the love and fellowship of the brethren. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Then the privilege of service. Of serving whom? Oh, our God, and our dear Master. Is not that something to be intensely thankful for, that we are permitted to engage in such blessed service as preaching the glorious gospel? Every time you hand out a piece of Truth literature you are preaching a sermon—not only one, but perhaps two or three—and reaching persons that our dear Pastor himself could not address orally. It is a grand privilege, especially now, to proclaim and disseminate the Present Truth, the glorious Glad Tidings soon to be made known to all people. That great angel is going through the midst of Heaven—not where God dwells but the heathen Heaven, and the Roman Catholic Heaven, and all other ecclesiastical Heavens, with the everlasting Gospel to preach to every kindred, tongue, people, nation, the glorious restitution Gospel. And this is strong corroborative proof that we are just at the end of the Gentile times, that the Gospel of the Kingdom has just about accomplished its purpose of taking out from mankind a people for the Lord's name, the Kingdom Class. Just think, that for more than 18 centuries the restitution feature was kept concealed from even the Church, but now the restitution time has begun and the work will begin shortly in the real sense, so the Lord is not only letting the Church know about it but also the world. Is not that glorious and grand? And to think we are permitted to disseminate such a blessed and glorious message, such glad tidings! I am sure the angels would be delighted to improve such an opportunity of service. Peter tells us in the first epistle, first chapter, that the angels desire to look into certain things relative to the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow. He did not refer to the sufferings and glory of Jesus Christ alone, because Jesus had been glorified, but the sufferings of The Christ. "If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him." So let us be thankful to God for the privilege of service we have, of

being associated with our dear Lord in such service, for you remember Paul wrote about being coworkers with God. Think of co-laboring with God and with Christ, and with God's dear people! I was much pleased with the advice the editor of the Watch Tower gave us in a recent issue to this effect, that instead of theorizing and speculating about what may take place this coming fall or next spring and so on, we should go right in and do with our might what our hands find to do in the Lord's service. Have you any idea how much longer this harvest is going on? Yes, I have. Will you tell us? Yes, I can approximate it—probably right up to the end of the harvest time, for that is what the harvest time is for, harvest work. So pitch in and do all you can to help along this grand and glorious work and be very thankful to God for the privilege.

Then another cause for thankfulness is God's great gift in the bestowment of His Son to die for us, and thus make possible the attainment of eternal life by fallen beings. We could not think of any of God's gifts as great as this. I imagine one inquiring: Would it not be as great a thing if the Lord makes us partakers of the Divine nature and associates with His Son in the work of blessing mankind, and associates forever? No, no the greatest gift God ever gave His creatures He gave nearly nineteen centuries ago when He sent His Son to earth to die for us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." Now listen to what Paul wrote: "If God spared not His only begotten Son but offered Him for us all, will He not freely give us all things?" There is the greatest of all His gifts to us, and all the other things together that are not so great. Yes, we thank God for that more than for everything else, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Praise the Lord for that! Praise God for such a glorious, magnificent and beneficent plan for the blessing of all His creatures! Amen.